Harmony-disharmony therapy: a treatment method of African origin

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ABSTRACT

The harmony restoration theory of health (HRT) is an existential phenomenological theory of health and ill health from an African perspective. The theory emanated from years of clinical practice of Peter Ebigbo in the mid 90s has its basic tenet, "he who is at peace with his world does not fall sick" and this is the root from which all other tenets of the harmony restoration theory stems. The harmony restoration theory of health was borne out of the African concept of illness. In Africa, the mind, the body and the society interact to produce health and ill-health. From clinical practice, it was observed that the African personality has three components, namely: the endocosmos, which is the relationship between the individual and himself; the mesocosmos, the relationship between the individual and the significant others in his environment; and the exocosmos, the relationship between the individual and his God or gods. This paper examines the HRT, traces its origin from the African traditional and contemporary religion, the socio-cultural, personological aspect of its derivation, its development and how it is applied in the treatment of psychological disturbances as well as in maintaining positive health. It also examines two case studies where the harmony restoration therapy was used and lastly, makes a case for its further exploration by other health care practitioners.

Keywords: harmony restoration theory: African traditional religion

HARMONY RESTORATION THEORY: THE CONCEPT

According to Igbokwe and Chukwuene (2006), "harmony connotes a state of peaceful existence and agreement or a pleasing combination of related things. This implies that the body in which there is presently peaceful existence and agreement was hitherto lacking same and also where peaceful combinations of things exist there was none of such before in existence". In harmony restoration terms, harmony means being at peace with one's cosmos (world). Once there is a peaceful coexistence between an individual and the components of his/her cosmos, that individual is said to be in harmony and the opposite is a state of cosmos cacophony or disharmony. Once there is imbalance within the individual, this causes illness, and it is only through the process of harmony restoration can the individual be well again.

Another conceptual standpoint regarding harmony restoration theory is the agreement among authors (Baasher, 1975; Ebigbo, Oluka, Ezenwa, Obidigbo, & Okwaraji, 1996; Ebigbo, 1986, 1989; Idemudia, 2003) that in Africa, both physical and mental illness originate from various external causes. Physical and mental illnesses originating from external sources suggest a gross presence of

disharmony between an individual and his external cosmos since the African is largely cosmocentric. It is important to note that the Western view or philosophy of man is individualistic while the Eastern view is collectivistic and any disruption in the collective relationship initiates disharmony or illness. For the African to live in good health, harmony must be maintained with his/her cosmos while any disruption or disharmony with his cosmos results in ill health. To the African, health is dependent on harmony between the individual and his world and illness is dependent on the disharmony between the individual and his world. The higher the harmony, the greater the individual's adjustment and vice versa. Since we live in a dynamic world, the individual's harmony (health) is constantly being threatened and the African is constantly obligated to maintain and restore harmony (Ebigbo, Oluka, Obidigbo, Udeoke & Okwaraji, 1997) as a result, treatment of illness, physical and natural, therefore means restoration of the disturbed harmony and this is called harmony restoration therapy (HRT) an off shoot of the harmony restoration theory of health.

Ebigbo, Oluka, Ezenwa, Obidigbo & Okwaraji (1996) observed that African cultures are animated by a belief in many spirits and they have large assortments of them. Similarly, Enang (1979) had earlier on noted that "there are spirits of a being higher than man, of invincible deities, of deified ancestors, of the dead and unidentifiable, and '*odudu*', which traverse the cosmos and become activated when tapped by specialists either for good or for evil". Since the African is so beguiled by this belief, he is constantly making attempts to always be at peace with his cosmos, with animate and inanimate beings, with perceived and non perceived in his cosmos.

The African's cosmocentricity is tripartite in nature. This three-layered nature of the African's world manifests itself in his personality. This means that the African has a tripartite personality structure which are: the endocosmos, the mesocosmos and the exocosmos (Ebigbo 2001a; Ebigbo, Oluka, Ekwo, & Izuakor, 2000). The endocosmos is the biopsychological aspect of the individual which represents the relationship between the individual and himself, intrapersonal dialogues, the traditional concept of self, the core of the individual's personality, the self-concept, self esteem, etc. the mesocosmos is the biopsychosocial aspect of the individual's personality, e.g., the dimension of the animate and inanimate beings that he does and could entertain relationship with, the individual's relationship with significant others and non-significant others in his environment, interpersonal relationship, etc. and lastly the exocosmos, which is the aspect which represents the individual's higher value like ancestorship, ancestral spirits, God and /or gods, creation, religion, culture, morals, philosophy,

myths, occupation and so forth. This three dimensional nature of the African personality can also be seen as the areas of the constituent unconscious of the African as distinct from the collective unconscious of other races. The constituent unconscious of the African is tripartite in nature and these three areas contribute individually to the African nature. Any disruption in the constituent unconscious, constituent preconscious or constituent consciousness of the African results in ill health and vice versa. It should be noted that the African personality unlike the Westerner's is largely cosmodynamic and less psychodynamic in nature. This means that the personality of the African largely draws from his cosmos rather than just his unconscious. The harmony restoration therapy was evolved to take care of the disharmonious relationship between the individual and the components of his cosmos (Ebigbo, Oluka Ezenwa, Obidigbo & Okwaraji, 1996).

Harmony restoration therapy is basically an existential approach to psychotherapy, psychology and life in general. This approach treats the person and not just the presenting symptoms. It is noteworthy to remember that even if an individual is not treated, such an individual would still recover through what Eysenck (1952) called "spontaneous remission" which is generally seen as recovery without reason or cause. This points to the fact that it is not necessarily treatment as such that alleviates the symptom of psychological distress but a process that takes care of the person. It has been argued that the challenge with psychology is its "problemcentric" approach and the challenge with psychoanalytic based and many other psychotherapies is their "methodcentric" approach. The challenge on ground is in the individual going through the process of focusing on the problem and solving it.

How can this be achieved and how does harmony restoration address it? This can be achieved by answering the question: why is it that therapy work? This was attempted by Seligman (1998) who, writing on the title "Why therapy works" asserted that, "I believe that it is a common strategy among almost all competent psychotherapists to help their patients build a large variety of strengths, rather than just deliver specific damage-control techniques. Among the strengths built in psychotherapy are courage, interpersonal skill, rationality, insight, optimism, honesty, perseverance, realism, capacity for pleasure, putting troubles into perspective, future mindedness and finding purpose". Instilling these in the client to him is basically the reason why therapy works out well.

The challenge is not the availability of therapies but the type of therapy in place. A quick Wikipedia search on the list of psychotherapies would bring a list of more than a hundred psychotherapy methods to the searcher and more are

still coming by the day. Although there has been a proliferation of therapies, there are some although few, therapies that attempt to point to the presenting individual albeit at a distance. One of such attempts is the well-being therapy (Fava, 1999; Fava & Ruini, 2003) based on the multidimensional model of psychological well being proposed by Ryff and Singe (1998) and the quality of life therapy (Frisch, 2006). The harmony restoration therapy is among the therapies that focus on treating not only the presenting maladjustment but most importantly, the presenter of the challenge.

Harmony restoration focuses on building strength and ensuring improvement in the individual's life. This means that the HRT is not just 'problemcentric' or 'methodcentric', it takes holistically all three but most importantly, it focuses on the individual beyond these, not just for the successful outcome of the therapy but on successful life adjustment. In HRT, the therapist as is expected, probes into the individual's past, present and helps him work through anticipated future issues. It goes beyond the "repair" or "fix" ideology which has permeated the general and more recently, the mental health field.

Harmony restoration theory and its therapy method is also used in explaining and treating marital problems, somatization, anxiety, lack of concentration, sexual problems, depression, heat in the head, goal frustration, etc with positive results.

The goal of HRT is principally to enable the client be at peace with his world. Harmony restoration is a continuous process, a conscious effort by an individual to be at peace with his world. Once that conscious process is positive and the individual's harmony is maintained, harmony is said to have been restored.

THE ORIGIN OF THE CONCEPT OF HARMONY RESTORATION FROM THE AFRICAN TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY RELIGION

Since many studies have not been empirically conducted on the components of the cosmos like spirituality, religion, intrapersonal and so forth, this brief explanation of the origin of the harmony restoration theory from African traditional religion will as a result, adopt a combination of anthropological narratives and empirical studies.

African traditional religion is rooted in African cultural practices and its practice is as varied as cultures are but they share certain underlying characteristics in common. African traditional religion centres on the following according to Mbiti (1970) and Idowu (1975). The belief in God, in the divinities, in spirits, in ancestors, in man, animals, plants, in phenomena and objects without

biological life. The African belief system is based on the supposition that God, man and the universe are subject to the moral principle of truth and justice or the moral order (Ebigbo, Oluka, Udeoke & Okwaraji, 1997). As a result, the onus is on the person to maintain a harmonious coexistence by observing the ethics of truth which is the essence of worthwhile existence. The Igbos have eight ancient values which are: truth, justice, trust, righteousness, determination, fortitude, peace and unity.

The worship of deities in African religion is also considered by other authors, e.g., Bascom (1950) and Opoku (1978). An important question arises as to what is the African traditional religion represented by? What is the physical correlate of African traditional religion? In an attempt to answer this, Mbiti (1975) outlined rituals, sacred places, art and symbol, proverbs, names, myths and customs as where African traditional religion are found. All these in one way or another contribute to religion and spiritual harmony within the African. Interestingly, not only is this harmony seen in traditional African religion alone, that is, before the advent of Christianity and Islam, it was transferred to these other contemporary religion. The continual existence of harmony in African traditional religion was and still is reflected in the names people bear. This was elucidated by Mbiti (1975) when he noted that:

> *"… in Nigeria the name Babatunde means "father has returned".*
> *It is given to a male child born immediately after the death of his*
> *grandfather. For a girl it is Yetunde, 'mother returns' the*
> *meaning of these names shows the belief that death is not the end*
> *of life, and that the departed return to be 'reborn' in their family"*
> *(pp. 25).*

This brings to the fore an important part of the African's cosmos – that of still trying to be in harmony with ancestors who have passed on. There is an unending unity between these two worlds – the living and the dead. The dead are spoken of as being very much alive but in another plane of existence higher than the living and having the power to protect the living. They are held sacred. Mbiti went further, with regards to the sacredness of the deceased, to note that:

> *"Some shrines belong to a family, such as those connected with*
> *departed members of the family or their graves. Others belong*
> *to the community and these are often in groves, rocks, caves,*
> *hills, mountains, under certain trees and similar places. People*
> *respect such places, and in some societies no bird, animal or*
> *human being may be killed if it or he or she is hiding in such*
> *places". (pp. 19).*

From the foregoing, it could be asserted that in African traditional religion, there is widespread belief in a supreme God (or gods) who is (are)

unique, supernatural and transcendental. This belief awakens in the African a sense of sacredness and a sense of mystery in his relationship with these higher powers and this reverence in turn transcends to sacred places, persons and objects with a set belief in the spirit world and hereafter. This implies that the invisible world of spirits and ancestors is always present and the intentions of these spirits can be ascertained. In Africa, care is taken to ascertain the will of the spirit to whom sacrifices may be due or from whom protection may be sought. This shows a perpetual continuum between religious life and normal life and a belief that the ancestors are the mediators between god and man. Hence they are held in sacrosance.

This quest for harmony in African traditional religious pattern is also explicated in the African traditional pattern of prayer. This takes on various forms depending on the individual offering such prayers. The prayer offered by the head of a clan is certainly expected to be different from that offered by a growing up young man. Notwithstanding, there are common denominators in their praying pattern as they both contain certain components and the pattern is almost always from the individual to the community. However, when a village chief priest is praying, it usually goes the other way. Components of a typical prayer were elucidated by Mbiti (1975) when he observed that:

> *"African traditional prayers generally include praise, thanksgiving, a declaration of the state of affairs in which the prayers are offered, and requests. Such prayers always have concrete intentions and people do not 'beat about the bush' when saying their prayers. They request such things as: good health, healing, protection from danger, safety in travelling or some other undertaking, security, prosperity, preservation of life, peace and various benefits for individuals. For the community at large, prayer may ask for rain, peace, the cessation of epidemics and dangers to the nation, success in war or raids, the acceptance of sacrifices and offerings, and fertility for people, animals and crops" (pp. 55-56).*

Also of interest is the fact pointed out by Parrinder (1976) that some authors feel that the belief by Africans in a supreme God is a rank-order system that is operational herein and that God is more of a glorified entity in that hierarchy. While not trying to see it as blasphemy on the part of these authors, it is important to clarify that African tradition, literature, culture, folk lore, philosophy is replete with the concept of there being a supreme God. This had earlier on been alluded to by Mbiti (1975) in chapter five of his book: *Introduction to African religion.*

Although there is a proliferation of Western religion in Africa, it is interesting to note that there is still widespread belief albeit at a distance, in the

traditional African religion even among the Africans who believe in the Western concepts. According to Tshisiku Tshibangu (as cited by Mazrui 1993, p.505): "the basis of moral values still derives more from the old cosmology than from the new beliefs". This means that an African would be more inclined to be in harmony lest the wrath of his ancestors be kindled against him than be in harmony because it is expected and preached by the priest. There is still an unfilled lacuna between the old and the new cosmology since the new belief is still laden with scepticism.

Kamara (2000) concurs with Tshishiku Tshibangu's assertion. His contention with the African predicament is the fact that Africans have left their old heritage. He feels that Africans should indeed return to the basis which is the African traditional religion in order for Africa to be free from the present cacophony that she is seeing in every sphere of her life. He believes that all the negative experiences Africans are having "are a direct result of our lack of adherence to our African heritage. Unless there is an immediate turnaround toward reaffirming, practising, and living our lives according to our African religion, the problems of the continent will only get worse." How are these related to harmony, the concept at hand? What is the fundamental contribution of the African traditional religion to the concept of harmony or disharmony within the individual? According to Onah (n.d.);

> "Harmony is a fundamental category in traditional African religion and thought. No attempt is made to deny or cancel out differences; rather all effort is devoted to finding a way in which differences can continue to harmoniously co-exist. In personal life, such a harmony consists in the ability to reconcile one's desires with one's means, coordinate one's thoughts, sentiments and their verbal expressions as well as the ability to discharge one's religious and social duties. One who is able to do this will experience inner peace. In the community, harmony entails smooth relationships between persons and other beings".

This was further elucidated by Taylor (1963) when he noted that:

> "a man's well-being consists ... in keeping in harmony with the cosmic totality. When things go well with him he knows he is at peace and of a piece with the scheme of things and there can be no greater good than that. If things go wrong then somewhere he has fallen out of step... the whole system of divination exists to help him discover the point at which the harmony has been broken and how it may be restored".

Furthermore, contributing to the harmony that the African experiences from the point of the biopsychospiritual, Mbiti (1970, p. 19) noted that: "Man lives in a religious universe. Both that world and practically all his activities in it are seen and experienced through a religious understanding and meaning."

Kamara (2000) agreed when he opined that the African traditional belief system is centred on God, ancestors, and a never-ending world and that these exert influence on human behaviour. All these point to the phenomenological unconscious drive of the African to be in harmony with his cosmos (Oluka, 1995). This harmony is seen to flow from the mortal man to the immortal and from the immortal to the mortal. There is a kind of harmonious bidirectional flow unless it is truncated by living contrary to the moral ethos. This harmony guarantees every good thing ranging from wellness of persons to crops and security of same.

Belief in spirits is an integral part of the African traditional religion. Mbiti (1975) identified two kinds of spirits, nature spirits and human spirits. While nature spirits are spirits associated with the sky and the earth, human spirits are those departed. These spirits are poured libations to with the intent that they are still part of the family though deceased. This means that the world is seen as dualistic, one being the world of the living and the other, that of the dead. To further elucidate the harmony restoration concept, it is pertinent to look closely at African philosophy with specific focus on the context of their understanding of human nature, mind, body and self identity. To explore this, the *Akan* conception of the relation of *Okra* (soul) and *Honam* (body) shall be explored.

According to Gyekye (1998), the Akan conception of the person is both dualistic and interactionistic. This means that both wield a certain amount of influence on the other. These two systems, the body and the soul to the Akan are not parallel. This is in line with the thinking of Ebigbo (1989) that the mind, the body and the society interact in a harmonious flow to determine the individual's state of well being. Although Gyekye did not point out the role of the society, it is pertinent to understand that the African lives in a social environment and almost for the society, so the society's role is pertinent. This can be likened to Mbiti's (1988) assertion that "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" (Mbiti, 1988). This is social collectivism in action. What does Gyekye's point of view hold for the African conception of health and ill health? From Gyekye's conceptualization of the interactionistic nature of the person – the body and the soul, it could be asserted that illness to the Akan emanates from the soul then flows to the body. This means there is an interaction between the soul and the body. Further, ill health in one inevitably results in ill health in the other and healing must inevitably stem from the inner part (soul) to the outer part (the body). According to Gyekye (1998).

"When the soul is enfeebled or injured by evil spirits, ill health results; the poor conditions of the body affects the condition of the soul. The belief in psychophysical causal interaction is the whole basis of spiritual or psychical healing in Akan communities.

This simply reiterates the fact that treatment stems from the soul and gets to the body and in order for this to happen, the interventions must be physical and psychical. Psychical here means it is spiritual and being spiritual points to the fact that it is applied by traditional healers. One of the modern methods of treatment which takes the physico-psychic aspect into cognisance and which has been used with success in Africa is the harmony restoration therapy.

To address the physical aspect of treatment, the self must get socialized. P'Bitek (1998) noted, contrary to the assertion of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, that man was not born free. He asserted that the umbilical tie was the first tie and then the societal ties which hold men together at times against their individual will. Interestingly, in Africa, this tie goes on to hold the person even after death because the ghost of the individual "is expected to guide and protect the living". This then means that the self in the African context is not an entity but a unity which must always be in harmony. Since the self must be in harmony, it must extract its wellness from the harmony it maintains with others and also experiences its sickness from the purview of the disharmony it experiences.

THE SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECTS OF THE DERIVATION OF THE HARMONY RESTORATION THEORY

The socio-cultural aspects of the development of the harmony restoration theory shall be examined by juxtaposing it with the mesocosmos. The second aspect of the component of the African personality structure is the mesocosmos which is also the biopsychosocial aspect of the African. With regards to social life, "to be human is to belong to the whole community and to do so involves participating in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of that community" (Mbiti, 1992). There is no isolation in the African culture, every individual is seen as a part of the main. According to John Mbiti, "the individual is conscious of himself in terms of 1 am because we are, and because we are therefore I am" (Mbiti, 1970, p. 279). This social collectivism is seen in proverbs, folklores, religions, myths, and so forth. For instance, a basic tenet of the harmony restoration theory is the Igbo proverb which says, "He that is in harmony with his world does not fall sick." In Africa, the individual is inextricably tied to the society and everything is done in unison. Proverbs like

"Igwe bu ike,". and *"onye aghala nwanne ya"* (unity is strength, and let no one forsake his brother) are two Igbo proverbs that illustrate this. Equivalent of such proverbs exists in other cultures. For instance, the Xhosas of South Africa have a proverb which says: *"umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu"* (a person is a person through persons). This is in consonance with Ngubane (1979) who pointed out, concerning the African's collective existence that, "the person, however, cannot exist of himself, by himself, he comes from a social cluster, exists in a social cluster" (p.78).

This simply means that for there to be an existence of harmony, especially within the mesocosmos, the individual's relationship with both his significant others and the society in general must be intact. What then happens when this harmony is not maintained in the society? The answer is in Thomas Szaszs' assertion (Szasz, 1960) that:

> *"our adversaries are not demons, witches, fate, or mental illness. We have no enemy whom we can fight, exorcise, or dispel by "cure". What we do have are problems in living – whether these be biologic, economic, political, or sociopsychological... mental illness is a myth, whose function it is to disguise and thus render more palatable the bitter pill of moral conflicts in human relations.*

According to Szasz, the myth of mental illness is more hinged on the fact that humans have moral conflicts in their relationship with one another. This means that any negation of moral order initiates disharmony which in turn causes what we see as mental illness. Thus, pointing to the fact that the idealized conception or false belief of what we see as mental disorder is rooted in moral conflicts in human relations exposing the plain truth intricately tied in the basic harmony restoration tenet that, "he that is in harmony with his world does not fall sick". This simply asserts the fact that "the essence of African morality is that it is societary" (Mbiti, 1970, p. 279). The society dictates what is acceptable and what is not acceptable, therefore man examines himself constantly on the societal mirror of morality in order to maintain harmony in the mesocosmos.

PERSONOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE DERIVATION OF HARMONY RESTORATION THEORY

The harmony restoration theory has three segments, namely: the structure of the African personality, the dynamics of the African personality and the personality development of the African (Ebigbo et al, 2000; Ebigbo, 2001a; Igbokwe & Chukwuene, 2006). The debate on whether there is an African personality or not has been an age long debate. Among the scholars who are not

in support of the notion are Pearce (1989), Okpara (1989) and more recently, Akomolafe (2008) and among the proponents of African personality are Baldwin (1982, 1984,1986), ya Azibo (1989), and Ebigbo et al (2000; Ebigbo, 2001a). One definition of personality is: "the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his characteristic behaviour and thought," (Allport, 1961). There is the likelihood that there exists an African personality which, following Allport's definition, could be seen as the dynamic organization within the African of those psychophysical systems that determine the African's characteristic behaviour and thought.

Africans like all other races of mankind have their uniqueness and this *"African ness"* is what defines an African. There is a distinct pattern of behavioural traits exhibited by Africans, which are uniquely and exclusively African and an African's perception of his world is one of such unique attributes that he has which makes his personality relatively distinct from that of other races of mankind.

For instance, the Igbo world view is reflected in everything the Igbo does, hence it depicts his personality. A look at the Igbo psychology of name giving which depicts everything about the person naming a child, more often than not, the father, will throw more light on this. According to Achebe (1998, p. 69)

> *"If you want to know how life has treated an Igbo man, a good place to look is the names his children bear. His hopes, his fears, his joys and sorrows; his grievances against his fellows or complaints about the way he has been used by fortune, even straight historical records are all there".*

This simply points to the fact that the Igbo personality revolves around the name they answer. Names like *"Onyekwe chi ya ekwe"*(which translates to "when one assents, his God (or gods) agrees)" will evoke a societal expectation of that behavioural pattern of the individual always agreeing with his God (or gods) for success in any venture hence this will guide the individual's action and manifest in his personality. To further explore this name bearing pattern and the personality it invokes in the individual's behavioural pattern, it should be observed that almost all names in most African cultures are not borne in full. They are usually abbreviated and given in the short form. It is only on further inquiry can the full name be known. Some names tell stories and some are simply based on events as Achebe noted. Hence the name above could be seen in diverse forms like "Onyekwe" and not in its full form. This represents cosmos construction.

The African tries to intellectually construct his world in a way that is infallible. Everything in Africa has an explanation and those that cannot be explained away are alluded to supernatural cause. Senghor (1966) called this the "being" and "life forces". The African essentially sees a dynamic system of reality and life force as an inseparable infiniteness that is ungraspable through his finite senses. He thus believes that there are always forces at work for or against an individual and at the centre of such forces are the ancestors. This was aptly elucidated by Ebigbo (2001a, p.6-7) when he noted that Africans, especially Nigerians, have external locus of control; "they therefore tend towards attributing responsibility for any weaknesses or inability or outright irresponsibility to outside forces". People with an internal locus of control believe that their own actions determine the rewards that they obtain, while those with an external locus of control believe their own behaviour does not matter much, that rewards in life are generally outside of their control. "A locus of control orientation is a belief about whether the outcomes of our actions are contingent on what we do (internal control orientation) or on events outside our personal control (external control orientation)" (Zimbardo, 1985, p. 275). This externalized explanation of events is one of the distinguishing factors of the African personality and how the African views his world.

In the context of harmony restoration theory, the African personality is also called the individual's cosmos and its structure is different from that obtained from all other races of mankind. Unlike the collective unconscious of other races of mankind, the African personality has three components which are the endocosmos, the mesocosmos and the exocosmos (see Ebigbo et al 1995, 1997; Ebigbo, 2001a). Cosmos is everything in the individual's world. Cosmos is ultimately existence itself hence, the majorly cosmodynamic nature of the African as distinct from the majorly psychodynamic nature of all other races of mankind.

In our society today, disharmony is the major source of conflict, in the home, office, everywhere. The disharmony causes all sorts of psychopathology including corruption (Ebigbo, 2001a; Igbokwe & Chukwuene, 2006). Disharmony starts from the individual and spreads to the society. Since illness whether physical or mental is as a result of a break in harmony between an individual and his cosmos, harmony restoration therapy is the mediating therapy which brings order in chaos.

APPLICATION OF THE HARMONY RESTORATION THEORY IN THE TREATMENT OF PSYCHOPATHOLOGY: A CLINICAL APPLICATION OF HARMONY RESTORATION THEORY AND THERAPY

CASE STUDY 1

A.J., a member of staff (non-faculty), aged 27, single, came to the clinic alone.

COMPLAINT: He experiences palpitation whenever he is told to perform any task, especially when students are around. A.J. is an electrician and feels that life has been unfair to him in many ways. He complained that whatever "he puts his hand into" suddenly "flops" except his work as an electrician which does not yield much money for him. He stays alone and prefers to stay on his own. He has decided not to visit his parents that live in the eastern part of the country because he is poor" A.J. wants to get married but no lady wants to go out with him. His challenge started when he saw a set of students graduate and come back to work in the same university where he had seen them and related to them as students. A.J. has not had any direct confrontation with any of them but feels they are lording it over him; that they are now members of faculty over him and his direct boss sends him to their houses to fix their electric faults for them. Since then, he lost interest in everything, blaming God for not being kind to him. He presented at the clinic because he was having difficulties with his co-workers and clients and was afraid it could put him in trouble if he did not change.

TREATMENT

Cosmoanalysis of the client showed an endocosmos disharmony. The challenge he was facing was basically as a result of his negative perception of events and of his inability to make lasting changes in his life. Since harmony restoration focuses on building strength and ensuring improvement in the individual's life, the endocosmos fixation which was as a result of his inability to incorporate the mesocosmos changes in his environment into his endocosmos to ensure continued growth, was first treated by helping him understand that change is inevitable and all we can do is follow through such changes.

The therapist brought the hidden meaning to past events in order to enlighten the patient on why he was acting out. The client was helped to become aware of his basic psychological needs and drives, and devising healthy ways to achieve them. He was given the assignment to re-enact his relationship with his friends that had come back which he successfully did and cognitive restructuring was used to treat the client.

RESULT

After a period of two months of weekly therapy, client reported a better adjustment to life. He had registered for General Certificate of Education (GCE) Examination and is working towards passing all his papers at one sitting. He also anticipates to register for Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) examination. He has contacted his parents and siblings and explained to them why he had not been in touch. His work has received a new lease of life and he has also achieved a greater level of interpersonal attraction, communication and peace and love, progressing towards cosmos symphony.

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